

REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated August 15, 2003. Claims 1-21 remain pending in this application. Claims 1, 9, and 15 are the independent claims. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Applicants note with appreciation the indication that Claims 3, 5, 10, and 12 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants respectfully refrain from so amending Claims 3, 5, 10, and 12 at this time because they believe their base claims allowable.

In response to the Office Action's objections to Claims 2, 9, and 12, Applicants respectfully believe the amendments to Claims 2, 9, and 12 adequately respond to the Office Action's objections and request their withdrawal.

On the merits, the Office Action rejected Claims 1-2, 4, 6, 8-9, 11, 13-18, and 20-21 under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pacher (U.S. Patent No. 4,894,813; hereinafter "Pacher") in view of Curry (U.S. Patent No. 3,922,665; hereinafter "Curry"). The Office Action also rejected Claims 7 and 19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Pacher and Curry in view of Pirim (U.S. Patent No. 6,304,187; hereinafter "Pirim").

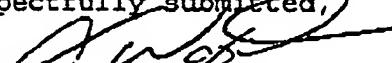
believe Claim 1 to be patentable over Pacher and Curry for at least these reasons.

Claims 9 and 15 recite methods substantially corresponding to Claim 1 and are believed patentable for at least the same reasons.

Claims 2-8, 10-14, and 16-21 depend from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are believed patentable for at least the same reasons. In addition, however, each is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, and should be individually considered on its own merits. Further, Applicants respectfully believe the § 103 rejections of Claims 3-7, 10-14, and 16-21 to be moot in light of the above amendments and remarks. Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the § 103 rejections.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the currently-pending claims are clearly patentably distinguishable over the cited and applied references. Accordingly, entry of this amendment, reconsideration of the rejections of the claims over the references cited, and allowance of this application is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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